

## YOUTH PROGRAM LEADS to Career – at HIRED

As a student at St. Paul Central High School, Tatiana Thompson got a big boost from HIRED. Now a college graduate, she's helping others in her role as one of HIRED's newest employment counselors.



Tatiana Thompson

During her senior year at Central, Thompson got involved in HIRED's YouthLEAD services, which are part of the larger YouthLEAD initiative of Ramsey County Workforce Solutions. Through YouthLEAD, she developed a mentor-mentee relationship with HIRED Senior Employment Counselor Donald Walker that continued through her years as a

student at Wartburg College in Iowa.

As she recalls from those high school days, she wasn't really aware she was entering a formal program. "I didn't know it was called YouthLEAD. I was looking for employment, and someone told me about Donald Walker getting people hooked up with work and helping them stay in school. He got me a job cleaning up after lunch at school, and making phone calls in the office."

Walker would come to school regularly, sit down

with the students, see how they were doing, and talk with them about their goals and plans, she remembers. "I wasn't that focused on college at first," Thompson says; she had been thinking of the military, but between Walker's encouragement and her participation in the college access program Admission Possible, she turned her focus to continuing her education.

Walker remembers Thompson well from those days. "With some kids, you can just tell they have potential and they just need a little

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## EMPLOYER ADVISORS SERVE AND GUIDE

Dozens of dedicated individuals who work for Twin Cities companies lend their energy and insights to HIRED by serving on its Employer Advisory Board (EAB) and industry-specific advisory boards.

Participants say they appreciate the opportunity to help HIRED and job seekers, but that they also benefit from the relationship.

Often, these individuals and their companies develop a long-lasting relationship with HIRED, says Program Manager Nancy Buysse, who works closely with the EAB. For example, Buysse

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guidance,” he says. “She started vigorously pursuing her goals. She followed the program, step by step, participating in training programs and activities – she was at just about all of them. She even went down and spoke at the Capitol on Youth Rally Day. She knew where she wanted to go.”

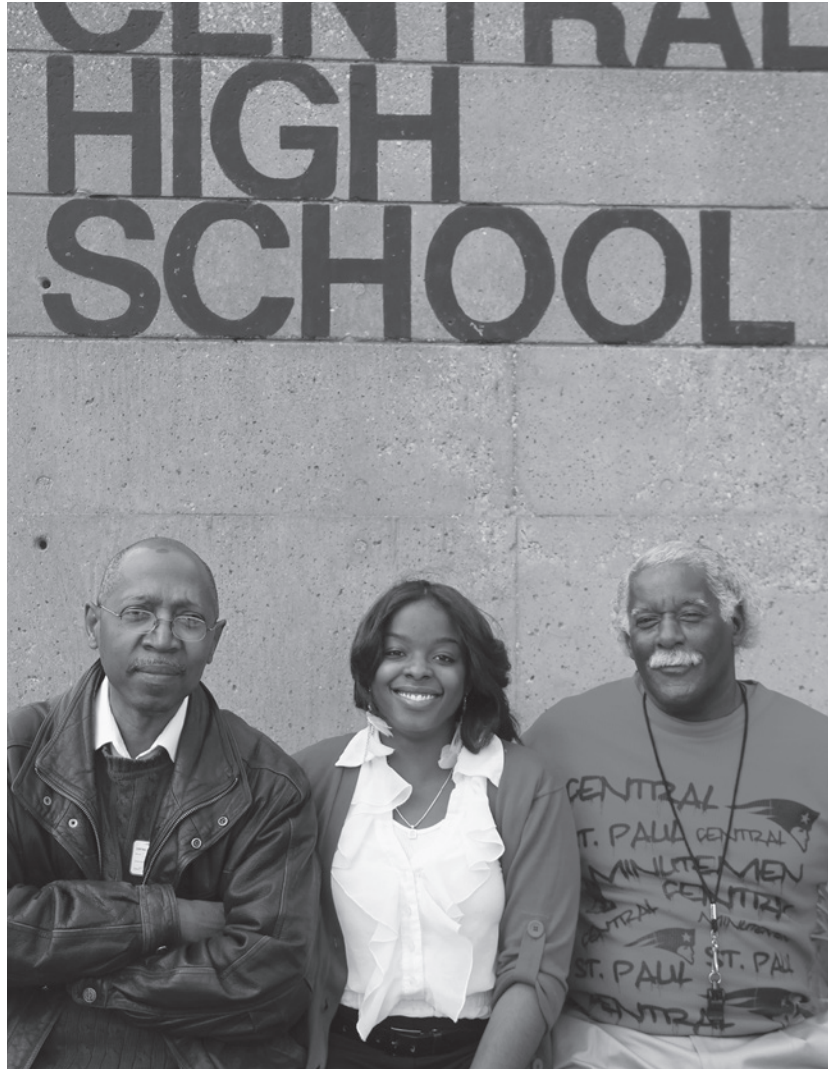
Helping young people get into college is a major step, but it’s not the whole story, Walker observes. “It’s not enough to just tell them to go. You need to stick with them and be a support team for them, in addition to the support the college can offer. I was in there, coaching her to stay in there. I gave her some extra support when she was coping with a particularly difficult time, and she stuck with it and came out with flying colors.”

There’s no question that having that extra support in her life has made a big difference for Thompson. “It was the fact that I could tell someone else cared, outside my usual support system,” she says now. “Gaining that relationship with Donald, seeing how much he cared, and getting that push from an outside source helped me appreciate and believe the support that I was getting from family and friends. It helped me believe, ‘I can actually do this.’”

Thompson stayed in touch with Walker, and when she graduated from Wartburg with her bachelor’s degree in psychology and community sociology last May, she let him know she was interested in doing the kind of work he does. When an opening for an MFIP (Minnesota’s welfare-to-work program) counselor came up, Walker referred her for the position, and she was hired.

Kari Kraft is Thompson’s new supervisor at HIRED. “What really spoke to me about Tatiana’s previous experience,” says Kraft, “is that she understood HIRED’s culture and mission, and knowing that, she showed a commitment to what we do. She is very interested in being a part of that mission and serving underserved populations. She has an extensive record of service to her community, both in St. Paul and while she was at college in Iowa, through volunteerism with underserved and homeless people who were struggling. She was doing that while doing her school work, and not getting paid. We really look for that commitment, and it was so clear that she had it.”

Thompson’s clients connect with her, Kraft says. “She lives in the community where our office is located, so she really understands the residents and has a unique knowledge and perspective. She truly is a success story – it’s so nice to see it come full circle, back with the organization that she says helped her so much.”



HIRED Employment Counselor Tatiana Thompson reunites outside St. Paul Central High School with her HIRED YouthLEAD mentor, Donald Walker (left), who is now her colleague, and her former work supervisor at Central, Attendance Liaison Steve Scroggins (right).

# BACK TO WORK

As America recovers from the Great Recession, the unemployment rate continues to slowly improve. However, a growing number of people occupy a category called the “long-term unemployed.”

According to the Employment Situation Summary, released October 5, 2012, by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “The number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) was little changed at 4.8 million and accounted for 40.1 percent of the unemployed.”

HIRED Executive Director Jane Samargia says, “It’s very troubling that such a high percentage of unemployed individuals have been out of work for so long. We know that once individuals have been out of work for six months or longer, they’re often financially and emotionally devastated, which only compounds the problems they face in finding new employment.”

To get unemployed people back to work as quickly as possible, HIRED’s employment counselors develop a customized approach to re-employment with each client.

Senior Employment Counselor Brian Torkkola says, “The big question any individual needs to be able to answer is: Why should an employer hire you? Being able to talk about your skills and abilities is critical.” Using resources like StrengthsFinder assessments and practice interviews, counselors teach clients how to market themselves in a clear and confident way that demonstrates to an interviewer why they are a perfect fit for the position.

Perhaps the most important thing to do in any job search is to recognize and grow your network, Torkkola suggests. Many people get stuck sending out many résumés for advertised jobs without results. This is where networking comes into play.

“What I seek to do is expand people’s idea of what networking is,” Torkkola says. He challenges clients to create six different networking strategies for a diversified approach to developing connections. “Your network needs to be balanced and broad. Those who take that on and follow through see results within a few weeks, almost always.”



Short-term job training for in-demand career fields is one of many strategies HIRED uses to get unemployed people back to work. Pictured are participants in a health care career training program offered by HIRED, Hennepin Technical College and several providers of Adult Basic Education services in the west suburban Twin Cities area.

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# HOLISTIC SERVICES

# Strengthen Families



Staff members from HIRED's East St. Paul office gather around the "Mission: Nutrition" station in the office lobby. The station, created through a grant from the Walmart Foundation, offers HIRED clients information on healthy eating, recipes and community resources for food. Pictured, clockwise from left, are: Kari Kraft, Katie Dille, Tina Dudzinski, Annaka Sikkink and Stephanie LoRusso.

Parents employed outside the home hold many jobs. They work for an employer for eight hours a day, and then they return home to work as nutritionists, teachers, counselors, janitors and nurses.

For parents transitioning off public assistance and into the world of work, doing all of these jobs well each day can be particularly daunting.

That's why HIRED offers a wide variety of opportunities that go well beyond employment services. Workshops, support groups and speakers cover topics that get young families on track:

- University of Minnesota Extension nutritionists and other trainers have presented a healthy-eating curriculum and taught how to manage a food budget to keep kids well nourished and energized.
- The Raising a Reader program has introduced parents to the benefits of early literacy for their children and offered bags of books that could be taken home – often to homes where no children's books had been available before.
- In September, HIRED invited young parents – many voting in their first Presidential election this year – to a voter education/registration session, complete with a model voting booth. Reminding them that their vote counts too helps get them invested in their community.

Other educational offerings presented to young parents at HIRED include those related to: organizational skills and time management, choosing child care, car seat safety, positive discipline and parents' roles as teachers.

By providing parents tools for a healthy home life that they may not otherwise have had modeled for them, HIRED helps clients develop new habits and patterns that set them – and their children – on the road to success.

Looking one's best makes a good first impression and helps boost confidence. HIRED developed a partnership with Empire Beauty School, which offered makeovers to HIRED clients so they could look and feel more professional when applying for jobs.



## BACK TO WORK *continued from page 3*

HIRED can also help clients get specific training and credentials to give them a boost within their field. One client who enrolled in a program for dislocated workers says of Torkkola, "Brian provided useful feedback and then proceeded to find funds for tuition and books for the first semester of a year-long program. When additional funds became available some months later, he contacted me again, which enabled me to complete the full program. As a result, I was able to add to my skill set and eventually find a great new job."

In addition, there are new ways to search and apply for open positions. For example, job seekers can now apply for jobs on the social media site LinkedIn by clicking a single button. In HIRED's Career Advantage workshop, experts help clients navigate new technology and use sites like LinkedIn to greatest advantage. Creating and shaping a profile that showcases one's experience and abilities allows a job seeker to join the thriving professional network on the Web.

These strategies – from creating an online presence designed to impress potential employers, to developing a personalized networking plan – are proving effective in helping people find jobs after long bouts of unemployment. Samargia says, "For people who've been out of work for many months, it's critical that they have access to the professional employment counselors we have at HIRED. Our staff is absolutely determined that each of their clients – no matter how long they've been unemployed – has the energy, skills and attitude needed to compete in a job market that remains very challenging."



HIRED leads a very well-attended networking group each Monday at the Minnesota WorkForce Center – Hennepin North, located in Brooklyn Park. The sessions provide job seekers the opportunity to share job leads, learn about hiring trends and find support from other individuals looking for employment.

## DONATE

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Employer Advisory Board member Leah Oye, of C.H. Robinson Worldwide, talks with an attendee at a special job fair held for former employees of Best Buy.

## EMPLOYER ADVISORS *continued from page 1*

says they help HIRED develop and implement programs that prepare job seekers for the needs of the marketplace.

Brian Walli of St. Jude Medical serves on the M-Powered manufacturing sector advisory board. He's pleased to have had the opportunity to help shape the M-Powered program, a partnership between HIRED, Hennepin Technical College, area employers and other industry stakeholders. Walli says he and others have helped fine-tune the program to ensure it delivers the most useful training, such as teaching students to use measuring devices like calipers, micrometers and pin gauges. "We said, 'You must!'" he recalls – "and now they do."

Buyse notes that advisory board members help job seekers by conducting mock interviews, giving feedback on résumés, participating in networking groups and taking part in panel discussions, presenting the perspective of those who do the hiring. They also routinely send hiring representatives to HIRED job fairs.

Wells Fargo's Philomena Morrissey Satre served on the EAB for many years because, she says, she believes in HIRED's mission, "with all of the varied services it provides for people in the community, like veterans, immigrants and refugees, and dislocated workers. From an inclusion perspective, it's a wonderful fit for Wells Fargo," she says. "Secondarily, I've built

such strong relationships. Jane Samargia is probably one of the best executive directors in the Twin Cities, and Nancy Buyse is one of my key referral sources."

Josephine Simmons at SatCom Marketing is a new EAB member who sought out the opportunity to work with HIRED, which she describes as a well-respected, time-tested and creative employment services organization. She's looking forward to contributing to the EAB based on her success as a change agent. Despite the tough economic times, she says the perspective she brings is, "Let's not just lament; let's build some tools to have a good work life going forward."

Human resources manager Kathy Voss has been with the EAB since it was formed. She has offered her perspective as hiring manager in many helpful ways, including reporting on trends in staffing and jobs-training arenas before statistics revealed those patterns. "Statistics look backwards," she says, "but what's so impressive about HIRED is that they have been on the forefront of looking ahead. They focus on anticipating needs, not just responding to them."

Heather Bergmann of Vascular Solutions says she enjoys helping job seekers with their résumés and interviewing skills. She often encounters people who have been laid off and come across as very bitter. "No one wants to hire someone who is bitter," says Bergmann. "Through the EAB, I can coach people on how to frame their employment history in more positive terms."

HIRED's Buyse says, "The overall picture of what these volunteers do is phenomenal. They do countless things to support job seekers, and they all come together for the annual Jobs Summit. I think of them as our great circle of success."

## Upcoming Event: HIRED Works

**DECEMBER 6 | ST. PAUL, MN  
11:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M.**

Join us for HIRED Works, a one-hour get-together where you can meet with HIRED staff, take a tour, and learn about our innovative employment and training programs. Registration is free, and a light lunch will be served.

This session will be held at HIRED's office in the Griggs Midway Building at 1821 University Ave (Suite N-263), St. Paul, MN 55104.

To register, please contact Elisabeth Miller, HIRED's Development Coordinator, at 612-302-8504 or by email at [elisabeth.miller@HIRED.org](mailto:elisabeth.miller@HIRED.org).



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*\* Denotes members of our Work Solutions Society, who have made a five-year pledge of \$1,000 or more per year.*



In the past several months, under the banner of "HIRED Community Gives," staff members have collected food for the food shelf at the Sabathani Community Center, collected used bikes for participants in the YouthLEAD program, and made a cash contribution to Keystone Community Services as part of their annual school supply drive.



Take part in Minnesota's economic recovery ...

## Donate to HIRED today!

HIRED's employment training services are making a positive impact on Minnesota families, and one-by-one we're helping to rebuild a strong economy. Join us today.

## A United Way Agency



United Way has recognized HIRED's programs as a significant benefit to the Twin Cities community. Funding received from United Way has been used to support HIRED's sector training initiatives.



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# HIRED Short Takes

## NEW ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PARENTS

To combat the cycle of generational poverty caused by a lack of education, HIRED has recently launched the new Program for Academic and Career Excellence (PACE).

The initiative serves young parents who have dropped out of high school or a post-secondary education program, and are participating in Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) services in north Minneapolis and northwest suburban Hennepin County. PACE is funded by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

"Through PACE, participants will be re-engaged in school," says Division Director Barb Dahl. "They'll also re-

ceive one-to-one coaching to help them meet their goals regarding academics, work and family life. Our staff is making home visits so we can really get to know the PACE participants, and offer help and resources as they're needed."

## ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC INDICATIONS

Minnesota employers added 5,900 jobs in September, according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). Total jobs in Minnesota have grown by 1.3 percent in the past year, compared with a 1.4 percent growth rate nationally. "Minnesota has recovered nearly 90,000 jobs since hitting the low point of the recession three years ago," said Blake

Chaffee, DEED director of communications. "The labor market has been steadily improving since then, but we still have more work to do."

## #KEEPINTOUCH – HIRED'S SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Did you know HIRED has a YouTube channel? That we tweet? That we're on Facebook and LinkedIn? We invite you to keep up with HIRED and connect with the HIRED community through our social media.

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